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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS
REGIONAL WHIP

December 13, 2007

The Honorable Edmund S. Hawley
Assistant Secretary
Transportation Security Administration
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Assistant Secretary Hawley:

As you know, I have long been a strong advocate for providing TSA employees with full federal whistleblower protections. I am writing to follow up on a discussion we had during a Homeland Security hearing on November 14th. During the hearing I questioned what action you have taken to provide whistleblower protection for Transportation Security Officers (TSO). You replied that TSA was actively engaged in trying to provide certain whistleblower protections for TSO's. Last week I was informed by TSA that you are in ongoing negotiations which would allow TSO's to appeal to the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, but that as of yet no settlement has been reached and no specifics of a possible agreement have been released. Further, it has been reported that a system of adjudication would be in place by early 2008. I hope that you will provide me with specific parameters of the agreement TSA hopes to reach.

During the November 14th Homeland Security Committee hearing I brought up the fact that TSA employees, especially TSO's, rank amongst the lowest in the entire federal government in terms of morale. I want to be clear in stating that whistleblower protections to TSO's should only be the first step your agency takes towards raising morale. As I understand it, the current whistleblower protection proposal allows TSA employees to appeal to the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, but does not provide the full whistleblower protections available to other federal employees. Such a proposal would continue a well documented pattern of TSA employees being disempowered. Any action that falls short of providing full protections is hard to accept in light of the fact that TSA employees have also been stripped of any collective bargain rights. It seems clear to me that providing TSA employees with the whistleblower protections offered to other federal employees is a necessary first step towards reestablishing the morale of the TSA workforce.

I hope that you will take this opportunity to clarify in writing your position towards whistleblower protections for TSA employees as well as an outline of the agreement you hope to reach on this issue. This is a subject which not only affects the morale of your workforce, but is also critical for homeland security as these workers are often our last line of defense. I look forward to a timely response on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Pascrell Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress